

*Senator Margarita*  
**Prentice**

Winter 2004

Dear Neighbors,

I'm back in Olympia for a short legislative session. While we're scheduled to meet for only 60 days this year, plenty of important issues will be before us, including:

- funding K-12 education and enrollment slots for higher education;
- making quality health care accessible and affordable; and
- finding a replacement for our state's blanket primary.

Senate Democrats are focusing on putting people first and policies that promote opportunity, security and fairness.

In a supplemental year such as this one, we are responsible for making only minor adjustments to the budget we passed last session. The governor's proposed budget serves as a starting point in the Legislature's negotiations.

This year Senate leadership has asked me to participate in the budget writing process. As ranking Democrat on the powerful Senate Ways & Means Committee I will help determine funding for programs and services in the \$46 billion state operating budget.

Because this new task will take up most of my time, I have stepped off the Senate Highways & Transportation Committee and will no longer be serving as an ex-officio member on the state Gambling Commission. (That does not mean I will be backing away from gambling issues, however.)

As always, it is my pleasure to serve you in the state Senate. If I can be of assistance or answer any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Margarita Prentice*

Margarita Prentice  
State Senator  
11th District



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Sen. Margarita Prentice represents the 11th Legislative District. She is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Ways & Means Committee and also serves on the Financial Services, Insurance & Housing Committee.

## Gambling

I am still determined to prohibit the expansion of gambling. We have plenty of card rooms in Washington—and no one knows that better than the 11th District: We have a lot!

## Education

We have an obligation to every child in this state to provide them with the best possible education. Investing in our children, classrooms and teachers should be a priority—just as investing in Boeing was last session. We simply cannot afford to let our children—our future—fall through the cracks.

A proposal by the League of Education Voters would raise \$1 billion each year; that money would be placed in a trust fund meant for early childhood learning, K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. We will examine their proposal carefully.

We also should resist gimmicks such as charter schools, which would siphon money from our public schools.

## Primary

In September, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the popular blanket primary. One of the most appealing alternatives at the moment is Montana's open primary with private choice. There, voters receive several ballots, one for each qualifying party. The voter then selects one party's ballot to complete, and the remainder are discarded. The voter's ballot

selection remains confidential. Each party's nominees are determined by the results of the submitted primary ballots.

While nobody wants to give up the blanket primary, leaving Olympia without finding a replacement for it would be irresponsible.

## Training Aerospace Workers

Boeing's decision to assemble the 7E7 in Washington is great news. Much has been said about the changes the Legislature made to compete for this project. Opportunities for the workers have received very little attention. Two important pieces of the agreement ensure a highly skilled work force and will be finalized this session:

- A two-year Aerospace Manufacturing Degree Program will be created by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.
- An Employment Resource Center (ERC) will have state-of-the-art equipment for the work force development programs for the 7E7 and its suppliers. This will be available for public use after the first five years.

The Legislature's investment in Boeing's facilities and training opportunities demonstrates Washington's ability to be an aggressive competitor for aerospace, bio- and high-tech industries. Direct and indirect jobs created by these industries, their suppliers, and the many businesses providing their products and services are vital to our state's economic recovery.

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